

LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST

OF THE

MONTREAL EARLY CLOSING ASSOCIATION,

IN THE

Odd Fellows' Building,

JANUARY 3, 1851.

BY JOHN LEEMING.

PRINTED BY ROLLO CAMPBELL,

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Montreal



356 Quest. sociales, N° 5

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Montreal Early Shop Shutting Association,
January 27, 1851.

J. LEEMING, Esq.

SIR,—In accordance with a resolution passed at the last Meeting of the Board of Directors of this Association, I have to convey to you their *special* thanks, for the prompt and unhesitating manner in which you so kindly consented to their request, in delivering a Lecture on the "Practical Inducements of Early Closing;" and respectfully to solicit you to favor us with a copy of the same, with a view of having it published, and gratuitously circulated.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

RICHARD THOMAS,
Secretary.

LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN,

In acceding to a request to deliver a Lecture on behalf of the Early Closing Association of this city, I fear I have undertaken a task which I can but very indifferently fulfil; and I am not without apprehension that the excellent objects of the Association may suffer from the weakness of my advocacy. I have, therefore, to bespeak your very considerate allowance in judging of what I shall lay before you; for it has been collected and thrown together during the last few days, and at times which have been snatched, now and again, from the pressing claims of other duties, and at hours early and late;—in fact, had my doors been open at all the times when I wrote this Lecture, you would have loudly called upon me to become a member of your Association, and shut up earlier; and indeed I should have small claim to be a consistent advocate of your views, if the objects you aim at were to close the *labors* of every day at seven o'clock each evening. It need hardly be stated, that you wish to obtain release from the duties of *business* at that hour, avowedly and sincerely from a desire to enter on *other* exercises, which you believe, and which I believe, are absolute duties, and the neglect of which will not fail to be injurious both to yourselves and others in after life. I, therefore, have pleasure in identifying myself at once with your aims and objects; and speaking in your name, and on your behalf, I say, we do not want to close the *labors* of the day at seven

o'clock in the evening,—we only want to close *one class* of exertion—one kind of labor; we want to give business its proper place, and conscientiously and industriously to satisfy its rightful and its honorable claims; but we want also to have time for the rightful claims of improvement and self culture. We undervalue not, much less do we deny, the justice which requires our daily toil; but we plead for a chance to keep our place in the *march of mind*, the progress of intelligence, and in the acquirements demanded by the enlightened society of the age in which we live. We are willing to work, but we want to read; we have to learn and practise business, and by it we hope to clothe and feed ourselves, and supply our physical wants; but we ask and entreat for opportunities to learn and practice the more ennobling resources, which shall fit us for the higher duties of intelligent citizens, so that we may in due time take our places in any position we may gain, and fill those places as merchants and citizens with respectability and success.

To accomplish this, we have associated ourselves, and intend to succeed in obtaining such reasonable objects, by keeping the justice of our claims, the evidence of experience, the weakness of the arguments used against us, and the common interests of all, before the public and our employers. In doing this, we desire not to take the highest ground conferred by actual right; we desire to shew befitting honor, respect, and courtesy to our employers, and those who oppose or are indifferent to our wishes. We want to argue and talk out the matter kindly, betwixt man and man: but, first, let us assure all, that we heartily lament the indiscretion of the over zealous,—we disclaim most solemnly all threat and defiance,—we

denounce a word or look of disrespect in attaining those objects. We will not willingly lose sight of our relative position as between servant and master, nor will we willingly forget our station in the midst of an enlightened and observant community.

This, then, is our object, viz., to secure an uniform practice of closing retail shops, in every branch of trade, in our city, at seven o'clock in the evening during the winter months.

I will, with your permission, read an extract or two from the last report of this Association; but before doing so, allow me to remark, that this report, and reports issued by similar Associations, and also the speeches of most eminent men at public meetings in Great Britain: in short, all that has been published in connection with the early closing movement, and indeed all that can be urged on the subject, is of such a character as cannot fail to strike every one at once, that the whole question at issue is narrowed into a very small compass. There really is nothing like effective argument *against* it. But we do possess the overwhelming testimony of great and good men in its *favor*; we can point to the certificates of large and influential retail merchants, who have tried it, and authorized the publication of their unqualified approval of its results. We confidently say, that on general grounds, there is no dispute left. The principle we contend for is this—that those employed in retail establishments ought to have sufficient leisure for mental recreation and moral culture. Well, this is denied by none. Who raises his voice and says no, they ought not? None. Not an argument either selfishness or experience can produce, is advanced to meet so palpable and plain a doctrine. But there is

an opposition to its practical adoption; there is an antagonism which denies that it shall be so. It is with this we have to contend. It is a subtle foe—we scarce know how to contend with it. We fear there is much selfishness and prejudice at the root of it, and we are almost nonplussed how to eradicate its influence. It is so subtle that it is almost impossible to grapple with it. Would that it would yield to argument; or that it would openly say on what *real* grounds it rests. We name not the shield behind which it hides itself; but we have in our armoury the means whereby it *shall* yet be dislodged, and overcome. We purpose to bring to it the wholesome influence of public opinion. We believe it has no real defence. Its best apology is *custom*; and

“Such slaves are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, that worst of ills,
Because delivered down from *sire to son*,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.”

Before, however, reading the extracts I propose from the report, allow me to allude to a singular feature in the Early Closing movement, both here and everywhere else, so far as my observation has gone; and that is, that it has not been met by any counter movement by its opponents. We have not yet heard of the “Anti-Early Closing Association.” Now, if any principle of honor or integrity had been invaded by the Clerks,—if their claims had any foundation but truth and justice, the public regard of what is right would have long since frowned them down, and sternly bid them remain behind the counter. Yes, if their appeals to the good feeling, good sense, and consideration of the customers, had in its composition any solid ground

of objection, would it not have been powerfully set forth,—would not a counter movement have been made? Yes, and most assuredly it would have been deservedly successful. But we receive no statistics of the advantages of late hours. We may wait yet some time ere we are favored with any example of physical and mental vigor which shall tell us—this is the result of late hours of application behind a retail counter; nay, viewing it as a simple question of £. s. d., who will step forward and shew us how much he has lost by closing at seven,—that any customer has forsaken his store in consequence,—or, that his goods have been injured for the want of the evening air, or from a contracted supply of execrable gas? Will any master step forward and contend that by closing at seven he has himself suffered in *health*, or that his family has been more harassed and disturbed; that it has cut short his evening visit to a friend or neighbor; that he has to give up his newspaper in consequence, and been obliged to sell half his books? Suppose the movement had been the reverse,—that the practice *had been to shut at seven*, but altered circumstances of trade, and the paramount claims of fashion, had demanded that shops should be kept open till ten that were previously closed at seven, would not your masters have pleaded these very arguments? Would they not have said, “My health cannot stand it; my domestic servants will not stop; my family is disturbed at the retiring hour of rest; I have had to give up my newspaper; I have sent almost all my books to auction; and all my literary tastes and pursuits are thus interfered with and destroyed. But what is worse, my goods are ruined by gas—the chill night air brings influenza and sickness to my clerks—

it costs me I don't know how much more in wood; and the crowning injustice is, that your fashionable customers, who have demanded this innovation, come only once and again for trifles previously forgot." And it is probable that they—the masters—might also have thought of pleading that their clerks—eagerly availing themselves of the hours after seven, for reading, attending the Mechanics' Institute or the Mercantile Library Association—complained of the hardship, and earnestly hoped that the wholesome, proper, and regular hour of seven o'clock might not be abandoned.

The Report I now hold in my hands, was presented to the Association in November last; and without reading it at length, which however it might be well to do, inasmuch as it has not been published, I will call your attention to the following important part of it:—

"Your Board have to report, that on the formation of the Association, two Addresses were printed and circulated,—one to the Retail Merchants, and the other to the Public,—setting forth the object of the movement, and soliciting their aid and sympathy in its behalf.

"A Canvassing Committee was then appointed to wait on the several Retail Merchants, with a view of inducing them by all proper means to give their assent to the proposed plan of Early Shop Shutting."

This Canvassing Committee furnished the Association with a report, to the following extract from which I beg your attention:—

"Your Committee regret observing, that while cheered on in their duty by much encouragement, yet they cannot conceal from you, that there exists a strong feeling of opposition to the plan proposed. The following are the objections put forth as most deserving of attention:—

'Country merchants arriving in town in the evening, and invariably leaving the next morning, must make their purchases and load at night.

'The Gas Company having no seven o'clock hour of burning in their tariff, merchants closing their stores at seven o'clock, would be obliged to pay for gas until eight, and thus suffer an imposition.

‘Clerks employing the leisure thus afforded them to the indulgence of their evil propensities.

‘They will not be compelled to close at any particular hour ; they like freedom, and will enjoy it.

‘Our city would present a dull appearance, making it less inviting for strangers to visit us ; this, with other reasons not worthy of note ; business hours should not be limited to eight o’clock in summer.’”

Now, here we have the arguments and objections of such of our retail friends as decline complying with the Early Shop Shutting arrangement.

Before I proceed, permit me to offer a word of gratitude and honour to those who have complied with the proposed arrangement. Let me say, if any parties were likely to be sufferers by the adoption of an earlier hour of closing, it is undoubtedly these gentlemen and firms, whose names I will read to you ; they have as much to gain and lose by alteration in the ordinary forms and requirements of business as any citizens. I may say, and I do say, they have more. It cannot, then, but be the subject of sincere congratulation to the Association, that the most steadfast and sincere well-wishers to the Early Closing movement, are the largest amongst our retail establishments ; and who, if sacrifice was to be made, would have to make the largest sacrifice. Have they done it in an half-and-half, grudgingly, ill natured way ? No ; they have not only adopted it, but they handsomely came forward, endorsed the change, and gave you the following certificate of their approval. Now, mark every word of it, names and all :—

EARLY CLOSING MOVEMENT.

“We, the undersigned Retail Merchants of this city, have practised the short hour system of closing our stores ; and we do believe that, while it affords leisure for mental improvement and necessary

recreation, our business is done as profitably and well as under the old system ; and, therefore, have no hesitation in stating, that it is our desire to see the efforts of the young men engaged in the movement, crowned with success :—

Thomas Mussen.	Smith & Morgan.	J. Arthur & Co.
Benjamin & Brothers.	John M'Coy.	Wm. Thompson.
James Armitage.	H. Solomon.	P. Gillespie.
Christopher Campbell.	John Henderson.	A. Bresler.
A. Laurie & Co.	J. H. Mead.	George M'Iver.
J. & D. Lewis.	R. & C. Chalmers.	

Montreal, April, 1850."

And by a note handed to me by the Secretary this evening, I am authorized to state, since the above certificate was granted, some twenty or thirty of the principal retailers have adopted the short hour system, and would willingly have subscribed their names to it, if there had been time to call on them for that purpose.

Now, these gentlemen had practiced the new system for two years. They are qualified to speak of it from experience. With them it is no theory. It is an absolute fact, "Our business is done as well and as profitably as under the old system." Say not any longer, that business is to suffer by it, or that anything is to suffer by it. The only way in which suffering can be made any part of the argument, or admitted into court at all, is, that by the uniform adoption of earlier hours, much suffering, mental and physical, will cease ; and in the long run, the retail merchant himself will find that even his *pocket suffers* less. These merchants have done honor to themselves, and to the community at large, in thus responding to the "well understood wishes" of the great body of their customers ; and I sincerely trust you will not fail to appreciate their disinterestedness and decision ; and may they always be favored with good clerks and servants in consequence.

Well, now, all the objections met with by the canvassers, we find, may be summed up briefly as follows:

1stly. Country Merchants come in late, and must be served, to enable them to depart early next morning.

2ndly. The Gas Company have no seven o'clock tariff.

3rdly. The Clerks abuse the privilege.

4thly. Masters will not be compelled to close; being free, they will enjoy their freedom.

5thly. The City would look dull.

Now, it is satisfactory to mark that four out of these five objections have nothing to do with business—that all important thing in every man's daily life, which he is bound most carefully and jealously to watch,—to neglect which neither man or master is justified in doing. I say, advisedly, no clerk, however confidential his place, or however valuable his services, has the least shadow of a right to jeopardise, by either theory or practice, the despatch and the discharge of his master's business. I tell you, clerks, that if you are aiming at any end that will involve the loss of a single customer, or deduct a single dollar from your master's balance sheet at the year's end, you are wrong. Business is business, and must be attended to in a business-like manner: it must be looked after—it will not look after itself. Nothing requires more assiduous watching, more anxious thought, more constant care, than a master's business. He has not only the right, but it is his duty to direct, control, enlarge, or curtail, and cultivate his business—and it is your bounden duty to help him so to do. He engages you expressly for the purpose. You enter into a contract, alike binding by honour and agreement, that you will so help him—not

with eye-service, but willingly—not grudgingly, but with cheerfulness. You are to make his interest your own; and not only will you feel it your duty to use your best exertions to promote his good, but you will regard it as your duty thoughtfully to carry out the designs in his business which you know he wishes to accomplish. The question is, can the business be done in retail establishments if the closing at seven o'clock is adopted? We say it can—and we are prepared with proof that it can. But let us revert to the five points—the five objections just enumerated.

The first of these, is:—Country merchants arriving in town in the evening, and invariably leaving the next morning, must make their purchases and load over night. These country merchants must of course come in either by public stage or their own vehicles. Now, no public stages come in at seven o'clock, and if they did, I scarcely suppose any one will contend that they can complete any purchases that night; and if they arrive at or after that hour by their own conveyances, surely a man as well as his horse requires refreshment and rest to make attention to business very undesirable till the day after. I notice the report suggests as a remedy to this objection:—

“That a Circular to the Country Merchants be drawn up, and inserted in all the principal French and English papers throughout the country, respectfully inviting them to make their purchases when in town during the day.”

I may not be sufficiently acquainted with the nature of the business and the requirements of the country merchants who visit Montreal for purchases, but it appears a most singular exception to every other characteristic of the way in which business is done, if even any respectable portion of country customers

make a point of selecting their purchases after seven o'clock in the evening; besides, it is at variance with evidence, over and over again brought forward, that after seven o'clock, the receipts over the counter are in many instances exceedingly light,—in many instances they are nothing at all. I therefore cannot divine to whom the Circulars should be addressed, which are to call on country merchants to get here earlier, and do their business at earlier hours. I am firmly of opinion, that if any country customer who visits the city regularly to make his purchases, were informed that the establishment with which they dealt closed at seven, not one word of objection would be raised. Again, is it likely that in any establishment where this custom prevails, customers will be half so well waited upon and served by clerks jaded with a day's exertion—smarting under the sense of confinement when others are free, and perhaps sensible that the occurrence, which is very rare, will be used as an argument for keeping the shop open after seven? I am sure it is not likely, and it is not reasonable that it should be likely.

The second objection states that the Gas Company have no seven o'clock tariff; and that to close at seven, and pay for gas till eight, is waste and loss. I do not intend ridicule to be any part of my argument or inducement, and therefore I would simply say in reference to this objection, that under almost every circumstance it is cheapest to burn gas by metre. I will not attempt to bring myself to believe, or ask you to do so either, that any one will expose his goods to injury, the health of his clerks to suffering, and stand out in continued opposition to a most respectable portion of his fellow-citizens, for the sake of burning an

hour's gas, which he has previously contracted the Gas Company shall supply him with. Besides, gas contracts do not last for ever; and if any person is so determined to burn gas simply because it is his own, I humbly submit he may do so from seven till eight with the doors closed.

The third objection is, that clerks will apply the leisure thus afforded them to the indulgence of the evil propensities. So are the words of the report; in other words, the clerks would abuse the privilege. If it could be shown,—and there is no doubt but if it could, it would have been,—if it could be shown that a majority, or even a large minority, of clerks who have had the privilege sought for granted to them, had availed themselves of it for the purpose of indulging in dissipation and bad habits, the advocates and friends of this movement would rapidly disappear, and you would not see me here to-night to urge a general compliance with a custom so fraught with evil to the best interests of society. There have been, and there will be, no doubt, at all times, black sheep in every flock. Every popular effort for good has its drawbacks from the over zealous and from the inconsistent, but where is the man who will stand forward and hold up such movements to reprobation on that account? If the objections we are now considering had any ground to rest upon, other means to correct them ought to be, and would have been suggested and acted upon, rather than return to a system so monstrously unjust as to punish the many for the transgressions of a few. But I believe it has no such ground;—I believe the great majority of clerks who have the opportunity, turn their additional leisure to good account, and more than repay their employers in increased vigor of body and mind,

enlarged intelligence and information, unconsciously and inobtrusively brought to bear in his service. Do not tell me that any man, either the clerk or his master, are intelligent men, who never read. Reading and study do not give talent, genius, or natural ability, but they are absolutely necessary for developing and cultivating the mind. I speak not now of the pursuits of literature, properly so called; I mean the ordinary intelligence and information of every day life—that kind of knowledge every man ought to possess, and without which he obtains no respect. Men in business are not required to know and understand the abstruse sciences, or to be prepared to enter the arena of dispute with A.M.'s, L.L.D.'s, and F.S.'s of Schools and Colleges; we don't want you to shut up at seven o'clock to enable clerks to climb these heights, or pursue the sciences of that high class, though, to their honour—I proudly speak it—hundreds have done *even that*; and, in the interesting records of the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, we find details of many a fellow clerk, who in after years has made the world ring with his name, and whose knowledge to this day sheds light and influence—gathered by him in part after the laborious duties of daily toil—destined to bless mankind, when the gold, gathered by the earth-worm who employed him and paid him his pittance, was being squandered by his successors, in the very way—in the indulgence of evil propensities—which, no doubt, in his life time he had charitably guarded his clerks against, by keeping them employed, perhaps till midnight, whilst his sons and his nephews were uncurbed by any restraint whatever. I repeat, the knowledge every man ought to seek, is the every day intelli-

gence of practical life: as Milton, in his *Paradise Lost*, says—

“Not to know at large of things remote
From use—obscure and subtle, *but to know*
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom :—what is more is fume
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,
And renders us in things that most concern,
Unpracticed—unprepared, even to seek.”

Of all sense, *common sense* is the best. Of all knowledge, the knowledge of common things is the best. Let, then, your clerks have access to books, and time for reading them, and you will find little difficulty in correcting the evil which may result, if any should appear.

But to return to the objection for a moment. Even supposing that clerks do abuse the privilege, do you wish us to understand that you persist in the old late hour system for the correction and regulation of their morals? I should be glad to learn that such is sincerely your aim; if so, I would respectfully ask, if you think it is the best you can devise. If you have four clerks, and three would not abuse the privilege, though one would—are you justified in debarring the three from useful pursuits, to correct and restrain the reckless fourth? No; if you have the interests and morals of all your clerks at heart, you will rather point the erring one to the example of his fellows, or, I would fondly hope, show him how much you yourself enjoy the privilege of the relaxation which early shutting affords. But I do not think it requisite to contend for late closing on this account. If the young men are entitled to their time after seven o'clock, on fair, legitimate, and admitted principles, it is no argument to say they shall not have it, because they abuse it. So little ground do I believe there is for saying they abuse it,

that I shall not enter on the very easy task of shewing that it is in the master's power, without keeping his shop open, effectually to prevent it, or put a stop to it if they do.

I now come to the fourth objection:—That they—the masters—will not be compelled to close at any particular time; they like to be free, and will enjoy their freedom. I am very confident that no reflecting, sensible man will urge such a doctrine, solemnly and earnestly, before the public. “A bad excuse is better than none,” is an old adage, but this excuse is worse than any I ever heard of; and if such a thing were possible, it is really worse than none. In the first place, nobody wishes to compel you, and if any one did, you well know none can compel you. If any attempt at such a thing were made, you could effectually, and you would by right, resist it. Neither in this city, nor in any city in Great Britain, have these Associations even whispered that they wished to compel you; but they do ask you to listen to reason, and hearken to the voice of common justice. You wish to be free, and so you ought—but freedom does not consist in doing as you like. We all value freedom, and it is the natural birthright of us all—but the freedom you contend for yourselves, is tyranny to others. True freedom consists in liberty for each to do as he pleases, without injury to his neighbor; or why the necessity of any law? You are free, and perfectly at liberty to go and break your neighbor's window or his head, as you in your freedom may choose, but the law will soon step in and say, “You do not use the liberty your fellow-countrymen permit you to enjoy properly, and you must be restrained.” You are free to keep open your shop all night if you like, but have no right, or

freedom, or liberty, either to keep your clerk there all night, any more than you have right to expect him to live without food, or see without light. The very freedom you ask for yourself, you deny to others. Impatient of the least restraint yourself, you more firmly rivet the restraints of others. I ask you if it is not fairer and more reasonable to be just, and without looking at a question so interesting and so important to the young men you employ in so severe a light, to regard it with more kindness and consideration, and say to them and to yourself, "I find I can readily spare your services after seven, and you are at liberty to avail yourselves of the various opportunities which are now afforded, for enlarging your information; and it will give me pleasure to find you appreciate your increased privileges."

We now come to the fifth objection, viz.:—Our city would present a dull appearance, and thus be less inviting for strangers to visit us. Well, this is both practical and comprehensive, and if entertained by any considerable number of our opponents, ought to be turned to good account. An association to make the city as inviting as possible to strangers, and making it as attractive and lively as possible, will commend itself to the good feeling of all our citizens. Its members ought to be on the committee of the next Industrial Exhibition; and it is greatly to be regretted they were not organized during the late dispute between the Gas Company and the Corporation. The city was dull enough then in all conscience; and if this fifth objection we are now considering was raised in sincerity, its proposers would have been found coming forward then, and agitating for lights in our streets, to make it, if not inviting for strangers, at

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least *safe* for citizens. I confess I cannot find any kind of remark which I think would operate as an inducement to the propounder of this strange doctrine; but I charitably hope, it is used just because some kind of excuse must be made to justify a worn-out *practice*. The possibility of bringing the public, generally, to fall in with the desired alteration, has been repeatedly denied; but very trifling reflection and observation on this head will suffice to shew such denial is groundless. If a single retail store had not tried, we have daily examples in our midst, which shew that certain hours bring customers with as much, yea, much greater punctuality than uncertain ones; that short hours are sufficient to do the largest business, involving as minute details as any retail business. I now allude to Banks and other public offices. The Banks are open from ten till three, and in these hours their business with the public is transacted. Does any one mean to say that if the Banks announced that they would alter their hours of business from nine till five, or from eight till seven, they would increase their business? or, setting aside that argument, does any one mean to say, that their customers would from intuition, instinct, habit, conviction, or any other motive, still confine their attendance to the present hour, from ten till three? Certainly not. It is as obvious as the light of day, that the Banks fix certain hours, and their customers attend in time; and if retail shops fix certain hours, their customers will attend in time also. Banks, like shops, are opened for business, and for the benefit of their owners. As far as this question is concerned, they are exactly parallel cases; and the nearer they become assimilated in the hours of doing business the better for everybody.

As I have previously hinted, the best argument in favor of the late hour system is *custom*; and if our opponents would honestly say so, it would save a great deal of round-about talk on both sides. Which of them, I would ask, would be willing to adopt custom as their rule universal? Why, it was the custom to have candles for light till gas appeared. It was the custom to travel by train or stage till railroads were made, and to voyage by batteau or schooner till steamboats floated. But to come nearer to our subject; it was the custom, I am told, in this city, formerly, to open at daylight in winter, and at five o'clock in the morning in summer, amongst the French Canadians, and to consider business over at the highly respectable hour of noon,—and a capital custom it was. In this respect British precedent compares unfavourably with Canadian practice, and I verily believe that the late hour system was imported from Britain—and there, about twenty years ago, it certainly flourished in full vigour, as I can from personal experience fully testify. And I would not allude to it now, but that it will appropriately introduce a circumstance which came within my own knowledge, exemplifying from what different motives men act, and how necessary, therefore, it is to leave no arguments to be brought forward to influence others to do what is desirable and right. A strenuous opponent of the late hour system, used all his influence, and it was not small, to prevent the adoption of the seven o'clock plan. It was, however, carried notwithstanding, and on the given night for commencing, contrary to every one's expectation, our influential opponent shut up, like a good, decent man as he was, with the rest at seven o'clock. Now, mark the reason he gave:—“If I kept open after seven,”

said he, "when Messrs. A. B. C. and L. M. N. close, they will say, and everybody else will say, I do it to catch their stray customers, and I am above such meanness." It did not take two years exertion in that town of 50,000 inhabitants, to adopt the general plan for closing early; and no one benefitted more by the change than the individual who now addresses you.

It was my intention to have enforced the advantages by reference to its practical operation in Great Britain, and to have laid before you extracts from the speeches of some of the most eminent men of modern times, but the limited time I have had for preparation has prevented this; and I will only, therefore, refer to one circumstance, which illustrates the hold the movement has taken on the popular mind in the good city of Dublin. One of the most extensive retail houses either there or in the world, Messrs. Todd, Burns & Co., fell in with the proposed plan of closing at seven o'clock; after a time, that extensive firm thought fit to change their minds, and, being free, to enjoy their freedom; they would not be compelled—oh, no, they would just do as they liked. Well, the bare announcement of such a step in the wrong direction, at once aroused the generous and warm-hearted citizens of the Irish metropolis,—and who that has been there, does not know that that is their characteristic, as it is also of every Irishman. A public meeting was called, but did not take place, for the current of public opinion set in so strong against Todd, Burns & Co., that they were glad to shut at seven, and, as our southern friends say, "I guess they won't try it again." Let me read you from a Dublin paper the following advertisement referring to it, and it will shew you the importance attached to early

closing in the great cities of Great Britain and Ireland:—

EARLY CLOSING ASSOCIATION.

COMMITTEE ROOMS, 21, FLEET STREET.

"The Committee of the Assistant Drapers' Early Closing Association, beg to return their most grateful thanks to the Nobility, Clergy, Gentry, and Public of Dublin, for the kind and generous support so readily tendered to them, in the struggle to resist the lately attempted inroad on their privileges by Messrs. Todd, Burns & Co., and particularly to the several philanthropic gentlemen who volunteered their support at a public meeting of the citizens (should such have been deemed necessary to accomplish their object).

Thanks to the very warm sympathy of almost all classes of the citizens of Dublin, the attempted retrogressive movement has been crushed in its infancy.

They also, in an especial manner, return their thanks to those numerous and influential parties from whom they received letters of encouragement, and expressing their full approval of the judicious, temperate, and straightforward manner in which the whole proceedings connected with the movement were conducted.

The Committee feel truly happy at this successful termination of their labor, and tender their most sincere thanks to the Press, and the enlightened and liberal Firms who have stood by them and supported them throughout their arduous struggle.

Signed on behalf of Committee,

H. M. SHAW, *Chairman.*

STEWART WRIGHT, *Secretary.*

3d Mo., 12th, 1850."

This, you will observe, was only in March last year.

In the city of Glasgow, too, there was recently a grand demonstration in favor of early shop shutting, when a grand soirée was given in the City Hall, which was crowded with a brilliant assemblage of both sexes, and the platform occupied by the most wealthy and influential citizens. The Honorable Sir James Anderson, Lord Provost, in the Chair. The speeches of his lordship, and of the Rev. Dr. Craik and Dr. Symington, which I have before me, would well repay your attention, if time permitted, to read them; and would, I believe, leave a better impression on your minds than what I have got to say myself. I will

with your permission, read an extract from the Lord Provost, as follows :—

"The Lord Provost rose and said,—Ladies and gentlemen, it affords me sincere pleasure to see so large and respectable a meeting before me to-night. We are assembled, as you are aware, for the purpose of countenancing and aiding what has been called the Early Closing movement—of giving our support to those whose efforts are directed to diminishing the hours of labor in our shops and warehouses. I am happy to think that, of late years, a very great improvement in this respect has been effected. I believe we are very much indebted for it to that Society under whose auspices we have met this night—I mean the Glasgow Drapers' Early Closing Society. (Cheers.) This Society, although little heard of, has been laboring very assiduously in a quiet and inoffensive way, to bring about that change, which, I believe, is now admitted to be made—a change, beneficial alike to themselves and their employers. (Cheers.) Before the institution of this Society, there appeared to be no fixed hour for the shutting of shops. Ten o'clock was not reckoned too late; and if a customer should drop in even at that hour, although to make a very trifling purchase, the time was very readily prolonged. I ought to mention that a gradual shortening of the hours of labor from that time has taken place. But of late years—I believe, two years ago—an arrangement was made and gone into by all the leading houses in this city, that seven o'clock, for the greater part of the year, should be the hour of closing. This improvement, you may readily suppose, was not obtained without very persevering efforts; and I know that it requires still the watchful attention of this Society to prevent this good rule from being broken through—(applause)—and the old and tiresome system revived. I very greatly approve of the efforts which have been made in this good cause. I very warmly congratulate you on the success which has attended them. I believe that it will be found, that the desire so extensively expressed by the young men of our city, to have a little more time at their disposal, did not proceed—as some have been uncharitable enough to suppose—from any wish to spend their time in idleness and dissipation, but it originated in an earnest wish to avail themselves of the numerous means of improvement which now have been obtained among us. (Cheers.) I have no doubt that the most active men in promoting this early closing movement, have been those who are most zealous in their masters' service, and who are most likely to make good use of the time afforded to them. I believe that the response which has been made to this wish on the part of the employers, has been in no churlish or reluctant spirit; but they have consented to it willingly, from a kind and considerate wish to promote the benefit of those with whom they are so intimately connected. I am certain that the benefit is mutual—benefits that I sincerely hope that, on no pretence, will these new arrangements be disturbed; and I think it becomes all of us to do what we can to prevent such a great evil."

And on what different footing does late and early shop shutting differ here from Glasgow, I would ask? None, whatever, except in favor of Montreal.

I am rather afraid, that with us as elsewhere, an impression obtains that early shop shutting is to be confined, and is only sought for by Drapers, or by Dry Goods Stores. This is a great mistake. From their large numbers they stand generally most prominent; but if there is any difference in argument at all, I think there is less reason for Druggists and Grocers to keep open so late as the Drapers. There is no force whatever in the remark that Druggists should not close early, because people are taken sick, and want medicine at all hours; if there was, why then the Druggist ought never to shut up at all. There is not a shadow of an excuse worth anything, to prevent *all* from closing at seven o'clock. This is, however, a grave and important question. To it there are three parties, and to each attaches much responsibility;—these are masters, servants, and customers—merchants, clerks, and the public. The co-operation of each and all, will relieve each and all; but the opposition of one, incurs the responsibility of the three. If, as I have endeavored to show, the clerks only ask a fair and reasonable thing, and the public are not sufferers by its grant, I say the merchants cannot get rid of the responsibility attached to its denial. Be that responsibility what it may, injured health—cramped genius—curtailed intelligence—premature death—public disrespect—may, and may justly, lie at your doors; and, for what? you surely will not say for any of the five reasons we have had before us to-night, and particularly not for the sake of an hour's gas,—a fear, an imaginary fear, of your clerks going

astray,—a dread of interference with your freedom, which nobody threatens,—or, the dulness of our fair city. Rather let me urge on you to join in a movement in the right direction, in the firm conviction you are thus consulting the best interests of the young men of our city, the welfare and peace of the community generally, and the conscious satisfaction you will feel in your own hearts, that whether clerks abuse the privilege or not, you have permitted them the opportunity of acquiring useful knowledge—that you have countenanced and not retarded one part of the progress of the age, which in Great Britain has received the support and countenance of the great, and the wise, and the good; and which has in no way by experience falsified the expectations of its promoters and advocates, but on the contrary, has more than realised the most sanguine expectations of both, and now most extensively, and I may say nearly universally, in the largest cities and towns of the British empire, become an established practice, not again to be altered.

And why should Montreal be behind any city? Montreal is not, will not, and shall not be behind any city. Even now she is by far the first in Canada, and much before many of equal population elsewhere; but she is sadly behind others in many respects. We make no boast of our pre-eminence, for it is not disputed; we make no claim, for no one denies us the position. But we are behind, so long as we do not avail ourselves of all our advantages. I must say it, but I say it with all possible respect, that all retail shops that keep open after eight, are behind the age: they are behind in the march of progress; and if the prosperity and progress of our fair city were left in their hands, it would keep behind too. It is our interest, and it is

our duty to promote the pre-eminence of our city. We do not want it to be in the power of any one, stranger or resident, to say, other cities are ahead of ours. In other cities, the interests of each class of its inhabitants are protected and advanced with unanimity. Why should it not be so here? If a majority in number and importance decided the merits of a question affecting the general good, to what shall we attribute the opposition of a minority? We cannot say it is for the welfare or the fame of our city. We cannot say it is because the arguments they bring forward are unanswerable, for in reality they bring forward none. We cannot say it is because those who oppose us are the largest and most important shop-keepers amongst us. We will not, therefore, attempt to attribute it to anything; but we respectfully urge those who do not fall into our views, to ask themselves the question—Am I really acting fairly towards this question? Are the arguments they adduce of such weight as to justify my compliance? Do I really incur any responsibility by holding out? We leave these questions for them to answer.

But I wish to bring forward another fact, and its application is obvious. The active members and directors of our Mercantile Library Association, who are engaged in retail business as clerks, are now, and have always been, from establishments which close at seven. What is so obvious, then, as that the owners of stores who persist in keeping open late, are directly and distinctly opposing these and similar admirable institutions? Some of these masters are members of the Mercantile Library Association themselves, and yet deny their clerks the full benefit of its advantages.

I venture, moreover, to assert most fearlessly, that a majority of those who now keep open late, are thoroughly convinced of the undesirableness of the system, and express their willingness to close at once, if so and so will do so. In fact, just now, I believe, one whole street in this city suffers from the determined obstinacy of one individual, and all would shut at seven if he would, and in some particular trades the same feeling pervades. Well, if neither argument nor example—if neither regard for health nor morals—will induce these parties to come in, time, patience, and, above all, constant appeals to enlightened public opinion, ultimately will. And there remains no doubt, but constant and persevering efforts on the part of the clerks, in a respectful and legitimate manner, will surmount any obstacle which, without any reference to reason and justice, may be persistingly thrown in their way.

The subject, so far, has been treated on very general grounds; and my remarks, though not directly addressed, I wish to bear on the retail merchants. But before I conclude, I have something to say to the clerks, and for it I desire especial attention from them. In enlisting the sympathy of the public and securing the advocacy of your employers, and the active co-operation of others not directly interested in the success of your agitation, you undertake and involve yourselves in a responsibility of no ordinary character. Not only is your own character as clerks suffering from an injustice now happily wearing away, but the character of your abettors and supporters is also at stake. It is for you to see to it that no mistake is made. With you combination must not stop in action for emancipation; it must continue in exertion for

improvement. He is unworthy of a place in the ranks of your Association, who follows not strictly out the object you aim at. There ought to be no falling off in active energy when you get set free at seven; but each one among you should jealously see to it, that the leisure thus obtained is used for the ends proposed. I should be disheartened to know it to be a fact, (which I am happy to say I do not,) that any one of you clerks who had raised his voice for this important liberation, and to whom it has been granted, had not at once identified himself with one of the public Institutions of the city, and become a member either of the Institut Canadien, the Mechanics' Institute, or the Mercantile Library Association. It is at your peril for consistency of character or sincerity of purpose, that you fritter away the time thus placed at your disposal in frivolous visiting, or in sleepy, idle listlessness,—still worse would it be for you to spend it in even the approach to gambling, dissipation, or extravagance. I beseech you make no mistake in this matter—if you can combine to get free, combine to act like freemen. Frown down, both by example and influence, with your masters and among yourselves, any one of your class who would thus discredit either yourselves or your exertions. Set before you a purpose, and go straight for it. Determine to make yourselves men—in every sense of the word—prominent in your respective business, respected as citizens, useful as neighbours, patriotic as Canadians, without reproach as Christians, anxious for the welfare, prominence, and prosperity of the good city in which you dwell; and in the process of time, by patient and diligent well doing as a class, none will dare to treat you as slaves, or, by reverting to

the late hour system, rob you of your just and well earned rights.

Hasten the day, just Heaven,
Accomplish this design,
And let the blessings thou hast freely given,
Freely on all men shine;
Till equal rights be equally enjoyed,
And human power for human good employed;
Till right, and not self-will, the rule sustain,
And peace and virtue undisputed reign.

On the Lecturer taking his seat, it was moved by Jas. Morison, Esq., of the firm of Morison, Cameron & Empey, and seconded by Thomas Mussen, Esq.,

"That this Meeting, fully persuaded of the practicability and desirableness of the hours of business in the retail trade being limited to closing at 7 o'clock, P.M., in Winter, and 8 o'clock during the Summer months, would respectfully urge the Retail Merchants to comply with an arrangement so beneficial to all."

It was then moved by Thomas Galbraith, and seconded by R. Thomas,

"That the thanks of this Meeting be given to Mr. Leeming for his Lecture." Carried unanimously.

Mr. Leeming briefly returned thanks.
